

REMARKS

Applicants thank Examiner Maiorino for meeting with Applicants' counsel, John R. King on February 9, 2004. The claim amendments and remarks herein are responsive to the Office Action dated November 26, 2003 and fully incorporate the Examiner's suggestions made during the Interview. Applicants have amended claims 1 and 11. Applicants have canceled claims 6 and 7 without prejudice, and reserve the right to pursue these claims in one or more continuing or related applications. Claims 1, 3, 5, 8–11, and 15–17 are currently pending.

Claim Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e)

Chang et al.

Claims 1, 3, 5–11, and 15–17 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,391,007 to Chang et al. As discussed during the Interview on February 9, 2004, claims 1 and 11 have been amended to recite:

a blunting component comprising a shuttle member and a blunting probe mounted received in a slot on the shuttle member, wherein the blunting probe comprises a hollow tube open only at the ends and a blunt tip, and wherein the slot is capable of fluid flow therethrough

Support for the claim amendment is provided, for example, on page 6, lines 20–29, and in FIG. 2B.

By contrast, Chang et al., discloses a shuttle member without a slot (see, for example, FIG. 5A) and a blunting probe that is not a hollow tube (see, for example, FIG. 3A–3D). Because every element recited in claims 1 and 11 is not disclosed or suggested by Chang et al., Applicants respectfully submit that the Examiner's rejection is overcome and that amended claims 1 and 11 are allowable over the cited art. Further, claims 3, 5, 8–10, and 15–17 are also allowable because they depend from allowable base claims and because they recite independently patentable features.

Kinsey et al.

Claims 1, 3, 5–11, and 15–17 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,544,239 to Kinsey et al.

As discussed above, amended claims 1 and 11 recite "a blunting probe received in a slot ..., wherein the slot is capable of fluid flow therethrough." As discussed at the Interview, Kinsey et al. does not disclose a slot capable of fluid flow therethrough (see, for example, FIG. 5A and FIG. 5B). Because every element recited in claim 1 is not disclosed or suggested by

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Kinsey et al., Applicants submit that the Examiner's rejection is overcome. Applicants respectfully submit that the Examiner's rejection is overcome and that amended claims 1 and 11 are allowable over the cited art. Furthermore, claims 3, 5, 8-10, and 15-17 are also allowable because they depend from allowable base claims and because they recite independently patentable features.

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CONCLUSIONS

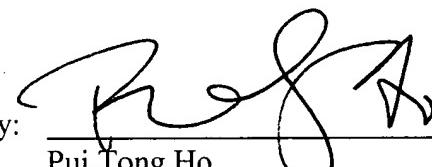
For all of the foregoing reasons, Applicants respectfully submit that all of the Examiner's rejections have been overcome and earnestly request an early allowance of all pending claims. If the Examiner believes that a telephonic conference would expedite the examination of this application, the Examiner is urged to contact the undersigned. Please charge any additional fees, including any fees for additional extension of time, or credit overpayment to Deposit Account No. 11-1410.

Respectfully submitted,

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